CLAIMS

What is claimed is:

1. A network-based, computer-implemented method of enabling a first user to purchase derivatives in freight capacity transported via at least two modes of transportation between a first location and a second location, comprising:

receiving capacity release data from a plurality of carriers, said capacity release data pertaining at least to said two modes of transportation;

bundling capacity releases in accordance with a geographic bundling criterion, thereby creating a plurality of available derivative contracts;

receiving a derivative purchase request from said first user for capacity between said first location and said second location, said derivative purchase request having contract requirements that specify at least a shipment volume and a performance time;

obtaining from said plurality of derivative contracts a plurality of potentially suitable derivative contracts that satisfy said contract requirements;

selecting a subset of said plurality of potentially suitable derivative contracts to satisfy said derivative purchase request, said subset including at least a first derivative contract for a first mode of said two transportation modes and a second derivative contract for a second mode of said two transportation modes, said two transportation modes represent two from a set of air mode, sea mode, rail mode, and truck mode;

rendering said plurality of potentially suitable derivative contracts displayable in a first data section of a computer window on a computer display screen for viewing; and

simultaneously rendering user-specific forecast data displayable in a second data section of said computer window, said user-specific forecast data pertaining to demand forecasts by shippers between said first location and said second location, said user-specific forecast data does not include forecasts associated with any shipper that has not expressed a prior implicit or explicit authorization for said first user to view their forecast data.

2. The method of claim 1 wherein said first user is simultaneously a shipper and a forwarder.

3. The method of claim 1 wherein said first user is a forwarder and not a shipper.

4. The method of claim 2 wherein a data item in said user-specific forecast data includes only a portion of a total volume forecast from a first shipper, said total volume forecast represents a total volume of shipping required by said first shipper between said first location and said second location during a time frame that fall within a time frame specified in said contract requirements.

5. The method of claim 4 wherein said portion is limited in accordance to a lane restriction criterion.

6. The method of claim 4 wherein said portion is limited in accordance to a geographic restriction criterion.

7. The method of claim 4 wherein within said portion is limited in accordance to a mode restriction criterion.

8. The method of claim 1 wherein said derivative purchase request represents futures purchase request.

9. The method of claim 1 wherein said derivative purchase request represents option purchase request.

10. The method of claim 1 wherein said computer window is implemented via an Internet Browser.

11. The method of claim 1 wherein said user-specific forecast data includes self-assessed qualitative ratings by said shipper, said self-assessed qualitative ratings being performed using at least four of a set of criteria that includes demand, manufacturing readiness, manufacturing location, capacity, product, lane, and lane stability.

12. The method of claim 11 further comprising displaying, upon expiration of a first purchased derivative contract, data pertaining to said first purchased derivative contract along with linkage data between a first component segment covered by said first purchased derivative contract and a second component segment covered by a second purchased derivative

contract, said first component segment and said second component segment representing component segments of a single end-to-end shipping order.

13. The method of claim 12 further comprising enabling said first user to trade said first purchased derivative contract in an adjustment market after said expiration.

14. The method of claim 1 wherein said plurality of derivative contracts represent futures contracts.

15. The method of claim 1 wherein said plurality of derivative contracts represent option contracts.

16. A network-based, computer-implemented method of enabling a market maker to trade in derivatives in freight capacity transported via at least two modes of transportation between a first location and a second location, said at least two modes representing two of a set that includes air, sea, rail, and truck, comprising:

receiving capacity release data from a plurality of carriers, said capacity release data pertaining at least to said two modes of transportation;

bundling capacity releases in accordance with a geographic bundling criterion, thereby creating a plurality of available derivative contracts, a number of derivative contracts in said plurality of available derivative contracts being smaller than a number of capacity releases represented by said capacity release data;

rendering said plurality of available derivative contracts displayable in a first panel of a computer window on a computer display screen;

simultaneously rendering aggregated forecast data displayable in a second data section of said computer window, said aggregated forecast data pertaining to demand forecasts by a plurality of shippers between said first location and said second location, said aggregated forecast data does not reveal data that links a specific shipper to a specific shipment quantity.

17. The method of claim 16 wherein said computer window is implemented via an Internet browser.

18. The method of claim 16 wherein said aggregate forecast data includes self-assessed qualitative ratings by said plurality of shippers, said self-assessed qualitative ratings being

performed using at least four of a set of criteria that includes demand, manufacturing readiness, manufacturing location, capacity, product, lane, and lane stability.

19. The method of claim 16 wherein said capacity releases are further bundled in accordance with a time frame criterion to create said plurality of available derivative contracts.

20. The method of claim 16 wherein said plurality of derivative contracts represent futures contracts.

21. The method of claim 16 wherein said plurality of derivative contracts represent option contracts.